

their profits, and they get subsidies. It's a fabulous deal for the private insurance industry because they are getting subsidized to offer plans which they can change on a daily basis in terms of senior benefits, and seniors can only sign up once a year; but it isn't necessarily a good deal for many seniors. So the President gave bad advice.

Very low-income seniors, yes, they should, if they are not covered by another plan, look very carefully at their options and probably sign up. Others with very high prescription drug costs who don't have another plan, perhaps, but some would be losers under this plan. Many others, it is questionable whether they should sign up, and the government is not making it easy for them.

Minimally, we should extend the penalty deadline. After all, if the pharmaceutical companies and the insurance companies can change the seniors' benefits on a daily basis, why is it seniors can only sign up for one plan a year, can't change plans and will be penalized if they don't sign up by May?

□ 1030

IMMIGRATION REFORM

(Mr. GINGREY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to stress America's need for border security reform. We should be supporting those who enforce our laws, not rewarding those who break them. I believe our border security problem can be managed and controlled, but to do so, we need the vital assistance of our local and State governments.

Local law enforcement personnel see the repercussions of illegal immigration every day, but unfortunately, they do not have the clear authority to handle this problem, nor do they have the infrastructure and financial resources to turn illegal immigrants over to Federal authorities. This has to change.

The House version of our border security plan cannot be complete without language to help local authorities enforce our laws. My friend and colleague from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD) has introduced the CLEAR Act, and I am a proud cosponsor of this legislation.

As we debate immigration reform, we must remember that illegal immigration is both a national and a local problem, and our solutions must assist law enforcement at all levels.

CONGRESS SHOULD STAY IN SESSION UNTIL IT EXTENDS ENROLLMENT PERIOD FOR PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN

(Ms. SCHAKOWSKY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, this House should not adjourn for the

year before we extend the enrollment period for seniors to sign up for the Republican Medicare prescription drug plan. I did not support the law, because I favored a benefit within the actual Medicare program. Instead, Republicans chose a plan that forced seniors to choose from multiple plans.

President Bush and congressional Republicans say it is necessary to have multiple drug plans competing in order to help drive down costs, but a report from the Government Reform Committee says the complicated drug benefit has failed to lower drug prices. The prices available to seniors are over 80 percent higher than those negotiated by the Federal Government for veterans and 60 percent higher than the prices available to consumers in Canada.

Instead of lowering drug prices, the new prescription drug plan has resulted in mass confusion for seniors. Seniors should have the time to make the best choice for themselves rather than be penalized if they do not make a decision by May 15.

We should extend the deadline by 6 months before we leave for the year and support the Stark-Schakowsky bill, H.R. 3861.

TRIBUTE TO JAMES HOLMES, JR., SECOND HARVEST VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mr. James Holmes, Jr., for being named America's Second Harvest Food Bank 2005 Volunteer of the Year.

Mr. Holmes is the founder of the community garden at the Children's Home in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. For the past 7 years, he used land at the Children's Home to grow 70,000 pounds of fresh produce to feed the hungry.

When Mr. Holmes started this project at age 76, he had never planted a seed in his life. Nevertheless, he pursued this project with a passion. As a former board member at the Children's Home, he convinced them to donate 3 acres for the garden and to allow staff to assist with the farm equipment.

Mr. Holmes is to be commended for his tremendous efforts. He raised the start-up funding to purchase supplies, recruited and trained hundreds of volunteers, and invested thousands of dollars of his own money to buy a tractor and build a storage building and irrigation system. Each year, he organizes the planting of the garden, schedules people to volunteer twice a week and joins the crews that work through the hot summer months and into the fall harvest.

It is an honor to have compassionate, caring, and hardworking people like James Holmes, Jr., in the Fifth District.

HIGH ENERGY PRICES

(Mr. CARNAHAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CARNAHAN. Mr. Speaker, as this body prepares to adjourn for the year, we have an opportunity to look back at what the people's House has done for the American people. The answer, when it comes to addressing skyrocketing energy prices, is not much, especially for those most in need.

As winter weather settles in around the country, millions of American families are facing skyrocketing home heating prices with even greater impact if cold temperatures persist into the spring. Americans are also feeling the effects of soaring energy prices at the gas pump. The double burden of these added expenses will be far too much for many families.

Rather than taking the opportunity to address these costs for those most in need, the Republican leadership instead gave billions of dollars in tax breaks to those who need it least, big oil and gas companies that have posted not just record profits but the largest profits in the history of the world.

Mr. Speaker, Congress should not leave this year without repealing those tax breaks for big oil and converting the savings to low-income and senior Americans that need the help the most.

HELP DEFEND THE RESPECT OF CONGRESS

(Mr. KIRK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, as elected officials, we hold ourselves to the highest standards. As Members of Congress, we pledge to defend the Constitution and uphold the laws of the United States. We are elected to serve the public trust. A breach of law by a Member of Congress is a serious offense that should have very serious consequences.

Taxpayers should not pay for the retirement benefits of a Member of Congress convicted of a felony. That is why I am introducing the Congressional Integrity Act of 2005, to restore trust in the Congress. It is joined by 12 other majority Members, moderates and conservatives for reform.

This important ethics legislation will lead us back to integrity in public life. The Congressional Integrity Act of 2005 would deny a congressional pension to any Member convicted and denied final appeal on a range of crimes directly related to their public duties, including bribery, including illegal compensation, including fraud, solicitation and tax evasion.

Mr. Speaker, similar legislation passed the House in 1996 by a vote of 391-32. It is time to finally pass this important reform.